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To: Ravalli County Commissioners
215 South 4th Street
Hamilton, MT 59840

Ravalli County Commissioners

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The enclosed communication is signed by Right to Farm and Ranch Board members Jay Meyer, Jack Pfau, Jim Ellingson, and Joann Hosko. It is an expression of their viewpoint as relates to the planned zoning of Ravalli County. It is a somewhat different viewpoint than that put forth as representing the RTFAR. Although it was written several weeks and several decisions ago, in terms of the zoning process, it is as timely today as it was a month ago. All of the above-named have "large" agriculture landholdings and/or are earning their primary living from agriculture in Ravalli County, hence are a very "invested" group. Please take time to read and appreciate our perspective and how we may be effected by actions seemingly beyond our control.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

July 7, 2008

To: Ravalli County Commissioners
Ravalli County Planning Department
Clarion Associates

The following is a position statement of the "no zoning" perspective of the Ravalli County Right to Farm and Ranch Board. We feel that we have dedicated a good deal of time and effort to compromise with those who support zoning, and that our efforts have been largely ignored and marginalized. Based on that history, we submit these points:

- Some members have become discouraged when, in the past, valuable ideas have not been taken seriously by the Planning Department, i.e. cluster development on a limited area of prime farm land. Instead, the planners forced scattered houses whose end product was destruction of a whole field rather than a small area.
- Planning department officials have assured the public that commitments have been made. Then suddenly that planner is off to greener pastures, and another person must be dealt with from ground zero.
- It is disconcerting when we understood that streamside setbacks were on the "backburner," to zoning, then discovered the final version is suddenly front and center, ready to be "ramrodded" to acceptance. We would suggest moving first through zoning, then address setbacks. Instead, we hear it is a draft proposal, presented, and ready for our reading.
- The dissenting members have time and again offered valid points, but feel ignored. There has been no feedback from the May 16 meeting with the Commissioners, where 1 residence per 10 acres was proposed. There has been no official response to us to date, but now we hear rumors that the plan is 1 per 40.
- We have been led to believe that we are the representatives of agriculture, only to find that we have been superseded by groups with little to no investment whatsoever in farming and/or ranching.
- We rightfully fear a document that is subject to capricious change once adopted. We especially are concerned about a Board of Adjustment that is not elected, wields huge personal power, and seemingly answers to no one.
- All necessary regulations are now in place, if only they would be properly utilized. There is great concern that this will become an attorney's paradise. With expanded government, property values will go downward. Property owners will have to spend money just to hold on to what they own. People with little to lose will be making decisions for those with large investments and everything to lose.
- Ravalli County agriculture will be condemned to what it is today. We suffer already with a short growing season, semi-arid precipitation, moderate to poor soils, and an isolated transportation system, among others.
- It has been observed that land where subdivision has been denied has been placed back in production, proving there are people who still want to farm.

In summation, these are some, but not necessarily all, of our concerns. We are not the

opportunists. We did not sell out when others did, making it possible for people to move here from other areas, looking for "their" dream. We should not be lumped with developers. We believe the majority of farmers, ranchers, and "large landowners" are opposed to involuntary zoning. Our input needs to be acknowledged. Compromise has not been successful, with our viewpoint doing the compromising while "the other side" forges on. In spite of being assured that zoning is not being forced upon us, we are told emphatically that it will be put in place, without a vote of the people. We respectfully call for a vote, both within the RTFAR, and within the electorate as a whole.

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